

REOPENING OF LAND BORDERS

PM's Thailand visit to bring 'good news'

BANGKOK: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob's official visit to Thailand this week is expected to bring good news on the reopening of Thai-Malaysian land borders.

Malaysian Ambassador to Thailand Datuk Jojie Samuel said Ismail Sabri's three-day visit, the first since he was appointed prime minister last August, was

at the invitation of Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan o Cha.

This is also the first visit by a Malaysian prime minister to the kingdom since the start of the global Covid-19 pandemic two years ago.

Jojie said matters to be discussed during the visit included the reopening of land borders, bilateral cooperation and exploring

trade and investment opportunities post-Covid-19.

"There will be some good news (on the reopening of land borders).

"Senior officials and a technical committee will discuss the details on the reopening," he told Bernama after attending the Kelab Malaysia of Thailand's (KMT) Chinese New Year dinner.

Jojie added that there would be discussions on recognising vaccination certificates from both countries.

Ismail Sabri is scheduled to go on a working visit to Bangkok from Feb 24 to Feb 26.

Last week, the Thai Foreign Affairs Ministry's deputy spokesman, Natapanu Nopakun, said Thailand was planning to reopen the Thai-Malaysia border in March to boost tourist arrivals, as Malaysian tourists had been the largest group of visitors to the kingdom before the Covid-19 pandemic.

He said the Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration and



Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob



Datuk Jojie Samuel

Tourism Emergency Operation Centre had been ordered to prepare and outline the pandemic mitigation measures for the reopening of the southern border provinces in the checkpoints of Songkhla, Narathiwat, Yala and Satun.

Natapanu said tourists from Malaysia would enter Thailand via the quarantine-free "Test & Go" programme.

However, travellers need to pass two RT-PCR Covid-19 tests on Day One upon arrival and the second on Day Five.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Thailand recorded nearly 40 million visitors, including 4.1 mil-

lion Malaysian tourists in 2019.

On KMT's Chinese New Year dinner, KMT president Datuk Bobby Tai said it was held to give Malaysians in Thailand a sense of "home festivities", especially for those who could go home due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

About 80 fellow Malaysians attended the dinner in compliance with Covid-19 standard operating procedures set by the government.

KMT was established by a group of Malaysians 31 years ago to preserve the Malaysian identity in Thailand and to foster fellowships for Malaysian families living in Thailand. **Bernama**